

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3947

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2
TAGS: CASC, MILI, PINT, SHUM, ES
SUBJ: APPROACH TO GOES ON ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

1. DCM LUBENSKY IN VISIT TO VICE PRESIDENT, DR. JULIO ERNESTO ASTACIO, RECALLED THAT EARLIER IN THE YEAR HE HAD GIVEN HIM A PACKET OF COPIES OF REPORTS BY THE WASHINGTON OFFICE LATIN AMERICA (WOLA) ON ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND ASKED WHYWHEN HE HAD A CHANCE TO LOOK AT THME AND WHETHER HE HAD ANY COMMENT. THE DCM EMPHASIZED THAT THE EMBASSY AND THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUED TO RECEIVE INQUIRIES ABOUT SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS AND WOULD LIKE TO BE RESPONSIVE. FURTHERMORE, HE SAID IT COULD WELL BE BENEFICIAL TO EL SALVADOR'S IMALA IF THE TRUTH OF A CASEWERE MADE KNOWN TO INQUIRIERS RATHER THAN PRESENTING ACROSS-THE-BOARD CATEGORIC OR "NO INFORMATION" RESPONSES ON ALL CHARGES.

2. THE VICE PRESIDENT APPEARED TO AGREE, SAYING HE HAD READ THE FILES AND HAD TURNED THEM OVER TO THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE. HE SAID HE WOULD CHECK AND LET ME KNOW. THE DCM THANKED HIM BUT QUESTIONED JUST HOW WELL THE MINISTER O JUSTICE COULD RESPOND TO THE CHARGES, SINCE MOST OF THE CASES INVOLVED ALLEGATIONS AGAINST SECURITY FORCES. HE THEN
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MENTIONED THE SPECIFIC CASES OF OSCAR ROBERTO ORELLANA MARTINEZ ABOUT WHOM STATE DEPARTMENT (ASSISTANT SECRETARY SALLY SHELTON) HAD RECEIVED AN INQUIRY AND OF RICARDO ARRIETA, AMERICAN CITIZEN, ON WHOM A FINAL REPLY TO AN EMBASSY NOTE HAD NOT YET BEEN RECEIVED. THE VICE PRESIDENT NOTED ORELLANA'S NAME AND SAID IN VIEW OF ASSISTANT

SECRETARY SHELTON'S INTEREST HE WOULD CHECK.

3. COMMENT: THE VICE PRESIDENT, AS ON FREQUENT PAST OCCASIONS, WAS CAUTIOUS AND NON-COMMITTAL ON THESE QUESTIONS ON ALLEGED HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. HIS REFERRAL OF THE WOLA CASES TO THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE INSTEAD OF THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE ILLUSTRATES THE DICHOTOMY THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THE CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ELEMENTS IN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE EXTREME RELUCTANCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT, AS A CIVILIAN, TO MIX INTO THE REALM OF THE MILITARY. ANOTHER POSSIBLE VERSION WE HAVE HEARD OF ASTACIO'S MOTIVES IS THAT HE HAS CLOSE FRIENDS IN THE MILITARY WHO SEE HIM AS THE POSSIBLE NEXT PRESIDENT, A CIVILIAN SUPPORTED BY THE MILITARY, AND BEING AMBITIOUS HE TREADS CAREFULLY NOT WISHING TO ALIENATE THE MILITARY.
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